

Self-Control as The Key to Good Manners: Building The Character of The Alpha Generation in The Digital Age

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to determine the effect of self-control on the manners of Generation Alpha among high school students in Karanganyar Regency who live in a digital environment with high technology exposure.

Methodology: This study uses a quantitative descriptive method with a correlational design, with a proportional random sampling technique from a population of 3,649 students and involving 251 respondents who meet the age criteria of Generation Alpha. The research instrument is a 45-item questionnaire that has passed the validity test ($r > 0.267$) and has strong reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.60). Data analysis was carried out using classical assumption tests for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, and hypothesis testing via simple regression and t-tests.

Results: The results show that self-control has a positive and significant effect on the manners of Generation Alpha, evidenced by a Sig. value of 0.001 (< 0.05) and a t-count of 5.607 $>$ t-table of 1.970 so that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. The regression coefficient of 0.882 indicates that increased self-control directly contributes to improved manners, such as maintaining ethical communication, being humble, speaking well, and respecting others.

Applications/Originality/Value: This finding confirms that self-control is a crucial factor in shaping polite behavior, especially in the context of digital life, which is vulnerable to negative impulses. Theoretically, this study strengthens the concept of self-control as a predictor of prosocial behavior, while practically offering important implications for schools, parents, and policymakers in designing character education interventions that focus on strengthening self-regulation to maintain polite values among Generation Alpha.

Introduction Section

Generation Alpha was born fully into the 21st century and grew up in a highly digital ecosystem. Generation Alpha is the most digitally connected in human history, as they are proficient in using smartphones, virtual assistants, and various AI technologies from an early age (Hidayat, 2021). However, this technological expertise presents significant challenges in character development, particularly in terms of social ethics and manners, which are pillars of Indonesian civilization. Good manners, as behaviors that demonstrate the principles of polite language and behavior, are crucial for building harmonious social relationships (Putri et al., 2021). Values such as saying thank you, asking for help, apologizing, speaking politely, and respecting others are fundamental to civilized social life. However, the facts show a worrying trend. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in early 2024 showed a 43% increase in cases of violations of ethics and manners in elementary schools compared to the previous year. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) reported 19,593 cases of violence between January and September 2023, a substantial proportion of which involved children aged 6–17 (Newsweek, 2016).

In the context of rapid digital information exposure, self-control becomes a crucial factor in preserving appropriate social behavior among Generation Alpha. Self-control refers to an individual's capacity to manage thoughts, emotions, and actions in accordance with long-term social objectives and norms, and it functions as a key mechanism for critically filtering and responding to social media content (Kelley et al., 2019). Research Leontovich et al., (2024) found that individuals with high self-control are more capable of regulating social behavior and complying with societal norms, which in turn fosters healthier interpersonal relationships. In contrast, children with low self-control are more likely to imitate observed behaviors without ethical consideration. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that juvenile delinquency increased by 10.7 percent annually compared to the previous year (Fitri et al., 2019). These findings suggest that inadequate self-control is closely linked to various forms of negative behavior. Previous studies also reveal a negative correlation between self-control and social media addiction, where adolescents with poor behavioral regulation tend to lose track of

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time, neglect responsibilities, and experience stress or discomfort when their online activities are interrupted. This evidence underscores the growing urgency of strengthening self-control among adolescents.

From the perspective of Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn), this issue has broader implications. According to the second principle, "Just and Civilized Humanity" and the fifth principle, "Social Justice for All Indonesians," good manners are an essential part of the moral values and character of Indonesian citizens. The concept of national and state awareness is closely linked to self-control (Harnanda, 2023). When Generation Alpha loses self-control, they are vulnerable to exposure to negative content that erodes the value of good manners as part of Indonesia's cultural identity. Ultimately, this threatens the nation's socio-cultural resilience (Rohmah, 2019). This challenge becomes increasingly complex as the education system continues to focus on academic mastery without providing sufficient character building (Usmi et al., 2022). Family factors are also crucial. Parents who are busy with their jobs, an unsupportive living environment, or a disharmonious family situation can hinder the development of children's good manners. Conversely, Generation Alpha lacks the digital skills necessary to become modern citizens.

Based on the literature review conducted, there are four major research gaps that have not been addressed by previous studies. No research has comprehensively analyzed the effects of self-control on the manners of Generation Alpha. This study Rodiah et al., (2024) only examined self-control in relation to social media use, not manners. This is despite the fact that, within the framework of *Social Learning Theory*, (Bandura et al., 1977) Self-control plays a crucial role in determining whether observed behavior on social media will be internalized. The lack of research on the interaction effects of these two variables has left an incomplete understanding of how self-control shapes polite behavior in Generation Alpha. The context of Generation Alpha, with its unique characteristics as digital natives from birth, has not received adequate attention in previous research. Most previous studies have focused on adolescents, Generation Z (Yusuf et al., 2019), or junior high/high school students without clear generational segmentation (Agustyn, 2022). Generation Alpha, born between 2010 and 2025, has fundamentally different neuropsychological characteristics and socialization patterns because they are exposed to digital technology and social media algorithms from a very early age, even during the golden age of brain development. Their character formation occurs in conditions where the real and virtual worlds are closely intertwined from the beginning, creating a different dynamic than previous generations. This gap is crucial because educational interventions and character development that are effective for Generation Z may not be appropriate for Generation Alpha, which has a different level of neuroplasticity and media consumption patterns.

Previous studies generally used small samples (less than 100 respondents), failed to test classical assumptions in regression analysis (normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity), and failed to explain how the social learning process from TikTok translates into concrete behavior. This study fills this gap by explaining the mechanism through indicators of *Behavioral Control*, *Cognitive Control*, and *Decision Control*. (Nurbaniyah, 2016) for self-control, which was then tested for its effect on six dimensions of manners. This systematic approach reveals that digital self-control requires a new concept that differs from traditional self-control. Theoretically, this study makes three significant contributions. This study validates the construct for Generation Alpha by adapting an empirically validated instrument ($r > 0.267$) that can be replicated for future research on Generation Alpha. Third, this study bridges classical theory with contemporary digital phenomena, considering that *Social Learning Theory* was developed before the era of social media (Bandura et al., 1977).

Practically, this study makes important contributions in four areas. For psychological interventions, this study identified a high-risk profile with 14.3% of respondents having very low self-control and 15.3% of respondents having very low manners, which makes it necessary to develop a targeted intervention program through self-control screening at the beginning of the school year, and specific counseling for students with low scores. Third, for parents and teachers, this study provides an evidence-based strategy showing that if self-control is low and intensive mentoring is needed (because $\beta = 0.369$ is at risk). Thus, this study fills a significant research gap by shifting the paradigm to strengthening self-control as a more effective strategy in maintaining the manners of Generation Alpha. This study's unique contribution lies in the partial model that integrates self-control with a focus on the unique characteristics of Generation Alpha as digital natives, as well as an explanation of the influence mechanisms based on empirical data that can be directly applied in educational policy and psychological interventions.

Given the complexity and importance of this issue, a comprehensive approach is needed that places self-control as a key factor in developing the polite character of Generation Alpha. Families, schools, and communities must actively collaborate to improve self-control. To equip Generation Alpha with strong character and the ability to adapt positively to technology without losing their identity as a civilized nation, a more contextual and responsive Civics (PPKn) learning strategy needs to be developed to address digital challenges. This study aims to determine the self-control of manners in Generation Alpha in the digital era. It is hoped that effective strategies can be developed to build the character of Generation Alpha who excel in technology while remaining loyal to the noble values of the Indonesian nation by understanding the correlation between self-control and manners.

Literature review

Self Control

Self-control or self-control is the ability to regulate an individual's thoughts, behavior, and emotions so that they are in line with long-term goals and social expectations (Kelley et al., 2019). Nurbaniyah (2016), The first is behavioral control, which reflects the ability to manage responses to both internal and external stimuli. The second is cognitive control, defined as the capacity to process, evaluate, and interpret information critically in order to make rational judgments. The third is decision control, which involves selecting actions based on personal beliefs and careful consideration. These three dimensions are interconnected and collectively represent a comprehensive self-regulation ability. Individuals with strong self-control tend to manage their thoughts, behaviors, and decisions more effectively. This ability plays a crucial role in ensuring that social interactions, both in virtual and real-life settings, are conducted ethically and respectfully. Röseler et al., (2021), found that high levels of self-control are associated with positive social characteristics and healthier interpersonal relationships, as individuals are better able to regulate their social behavior. This finding is further supported by a meta-analysis conducted by Ridder et al., (2012), which demonstrates that self-control has a small to moderate positive influence on prosocial behaviors, including politeness as a socially desirable form of conduct. Importantly, self-control is not only related to the enactment of appropriate behaviors but also to the suppression of inappropriate ones. Botvinik-Nezer et al., (2020), further emphasize that self-control is closely tied to social norms and standards that define acceptable behavior across contexts, including manners. Norm-violating actions, such as inappropriate speech or excessive self-disclosure, are often linked to insufficient self-control. Thus, self-control should be understood not merely as an internal cognitive mechanism, but as a capacity shaped by social influences, requiring sensitivity to the social contexts in which manners are interpreted and evaluated.

Politeness

Politeness is an individual's behavior which is a habit agreed upon and accepted in the surrounding environment which has two aspects, namely first politeness in language and second politeness in behavior (Putri et al., 2021). According to Kurniasih et al., (2014), operationalizing politeness through six indicators: (1) being humble, (2) not speaking rudely, (3) being friendly, (4) maintaining communication ethics, (5) having a neat appearance, and (6) having a 3S attitude (smile, greet, say hello). In the context of character education, politeness is an integral part of the moral values that Indonesian citizens must have, as reflected in the principles of Pancasila, especially the second principle "Just and Civilized Humanity" (Harnanda, 2023). The degradation of politeness can be caused by various factors, such as the influence of family, school environment, social media and lack of self-control (Laurentius et al., 2025). The education system which still tends to focus on academic mastery without strengthening character is a factor that influences this condition (Saputra et al., 2023). Kristiningrum et al., (2022), identified that supporting factors for the formation of polite behavior are influenced by internal factors which include knowledge, attitude, intelligence, perception, emotion, and motivation, as well as external factors which include the surrounding environment, socio-economic, and culture. On the other hand, a factor inhibiting low student manners is poor manners displayed by children with friends or teachers, brought from the home environment (Kholifah et al., 2017). This can occur due to parents' lack of attention to their children, busy work, an unsupportive living environment, broken homes, and a lack of parental education (Adristi, 2021).

Method

This research adopts a descriptive quantitative approach with a correlational design, as it seeks to examine the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable, particularly the effect of self-control on manners among Generation Alpha. The sampling technique employed is proportional random sampling, a method in which each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected in proportion to the population size (Sugiyono, 2019). The population in this study amounted to 3,649 students, who are high school students in Karanganyar District, while the number of research samples was 251 students. The criteria for selecting respondents were based on the sampling technique, namely students who are still in high school with an age range of 15 to 19 years who are included in the Generation Alpha category. All data obtained are only used for academic research purposes and are guaranteed confidentiality, and will not be disseminated to other parties outside the interests of this research. Data analysis techniques include classical assumption tests and hypothesis tests using the SPSS 27 application. Classical assumption tests are a series of tests to ensure that the linear regression model meets the basic requirements so that the estimation results are valid and unbiased (*Best Linear Unbiased Estimator*). These tests include normality tests, multicollinearity tests, and heteroscedasticity tests (Riduwan, 2022). After that, hypothesis tests are conducted as a basis for verifying the validity of the formulated hypotheses, which consist of simple regression tests and partial t-tests (Ghozali, 2018).

Data collection in this study was carried out through the distribution of online questionnaires using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 45 statement items measured on a five-point Likert scale. The formulation of the items was developed based on indicators derived from theories relevant to each research variable. The self-control variable (X) was

measured using three indicators, namely (a) behavioral control, (b) cognitive control, and (c) decision control, referring to the framework proposed by Nurbaniyah (2016). Meanwhile, the politeness variable (Y) was assessed using six indicators, including (a) humility, (b) avoidance of rude language, (c) friendliness, (d) adherence to communication ethics, (e) neat appearance, and (f) the application of the 3S attitude (smile, greet, and salute), based on the theory of Kurniasih et al (2014) to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data obtained, the research instrument was subjected to validity and reliability testing prior to data analysis.

Validity testing is conducted to assess the extent to which a questionnaire accurately measures the intended constructs. As questionnaires serve as a primary data collection instrument, the accuracy of research findings is highly dependent on the quality of the instrument employed. For this reason, the questionnaire was evaluated through validity and reliability testing to ensure its precision and consistency (Ghozali, 2018). Data validity was determined by comparing the calculated correlation coefficient (r-count) with the critical value of r-table. An item was considered valid if the r-count exceeded the r-table value, whereas items with r-count values below the r-table were deemed invalid. The validity test was administered to 55 respondents, and the results indicated that all items measuring the self-control and manners variables were valid, as each item demonstrated a correlation coefficient greater than the r-table value of 0.267. Furthermore, reliability testing was performed to evaluate the consistency of the research instrument. The results revealed that all variables achieved Cronbach's Alpha coefficients exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.60, with values of 0.952 for the self-control variable and 0.967 for the manners variable. These findings indicate that the questionnaire possesses a high level of reliability and is suitable for measuring the variables examined in this study.

Results and Discussion

Data Description

Respondent Description

Respondent identity is an important aspect to describe the characteristics and background of respondents in the study. In this study, the identity of respondents is presented through several main categories. First, regarding gender, this study used respondents as many as 251 student samples from the selected sample when viewed in terms of gender as a whole, the sample was female as much as 61% and the rest were male as much as 39%. Second, the description of the age of 251 respondents among students turned out to be in terms of age there are 4 grouping categories and the most taken at the age of 15-17 years as much as 66%, then 18-19 years as much as 34%, then <15 years as much as 0%, and age >19 years as much as 0%.

Descriptive Analysis

Data analysis is explained in general by conducting descriptive statistical measurements on the variables of self-control (X) and manners (Y), these measurements include maximum values, average values, and minimum values.

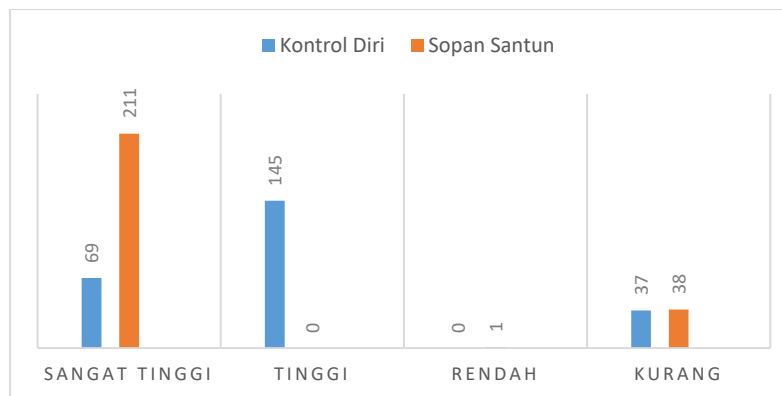


Figure 1. Interval Data Diagram
Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025.

Based on Figure 1, the average level of respondents' self-control is classified as high. This classification is derived from the analysis of the mean self-control score, which reached 145. The figure indicates that 69 respondents (27.5%) fall into the very high self-control category, while 145 respondents (57.8%) are categorized as having high self-control. No respondents (0%) were classified in the very low category, whereas 37 respondents (14.7%) were included in the low self-control category. Furthermore, the average level of respondents' politeness is categorized as very high, as reflected by the mean politeness score of 211. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of respondents, namely 211 individuals (84.3%), are in

the very high politeness category, while none (0%) fall into the high category. Only 1 respondent (0.4%) is classified in the very low category, and 38 respondents (15.3%) are included in the low politeness category.

Data Analysis Results

Prerequisite Analysis Test

This study uses 3 prerequisite tests, namely the normality test to determine whether the data population is normally distributed or not (Norfai, 2022). In this study, the coefficient of variance test is used, if the coefficient of variance value is less than 30% then the data population is normally distributed. The results of the classical assumption tests indicate that the research data meet the requirements for regression analysis. The normality test using the coefficient of variation shows values of 25.50 for self-control and 24.90 for politeness, both of which are below 30 percent, indicating that the data are normally distributed. Furthermore, the multicollinearity test was conducted to examine whether there was a correlation among independent variables, as a good regression model should be free from multicollinearity (Riduwan, 2022). The analysis results using SPSS version 27 show that the self-control variable has a tolerance value of 0.974, which is greater than 0.10, and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 1.027, which is less than 10, indicating that no multicollinearity problem exists. In addition, the heteroscedasticity test was performed using the Glejser test to assess variance inequality in the regression model (Riduwan, 2022). The results reveal that the significance value for the self-control variable is 0.626, exceeding the threshold of 0.05, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model used in this study fulfills the classical assumption criteria and is appropriate for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Test

The results of the hypothesis test will serve as the basis for proving the validity of the hypothesis formulated in the research. The hypothesis states that "self-control has a significant influence on the manners of Generation Alpha." This hypothesis uses two tests: simple regression analysis and a T-test using the Statistics program (SPSS) for Windows 27.

Table 1. Simple Regression Test of Self-Control

Variables	Regression Coefficient (B)	t-count	Sig. t	Information
Constant	23,232	2,659	0.001	
Self Control	0.882	5,607	0.001	Significant
R Square	0.191			

Source: Processed primary data, 2025.

Based on Table 1, the constant value for the self-control variable is 23.232, while the result of the self-control coefficient value is 0.882. Thus, a linear regression equation can be made by referring to the formula $Y = \alpha + b_1 X$. X, as follows. $Y = 23.232 + 0.882 X$. Y is manners, and X is the self-control score.

The regression analysis shows a constant value of 23.232, indicating that the politeness score is 23.232 when the self-control variable is equal to zero, which suggests that politeness tends to decrease in the absence of self-control. The regression coefficient for the self-control variable is 0.882, meaning that an increase of one unit in self-control leads to an increase of 0.882 units in politeness. Furthermore, the significance value obtained is 0.001, which is well below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that self-control has a statistically significant effect on politeness. The positive regression coefficient demonstrates that self-control and politeness move in the same direction, implying that higher levels of self-control are associated with higher levels of politeness.

Table 2. Results of Self-Control T-Test

Hypothesis	t-count	t-table	Conclusion
XY	5,607	1,970	T-count > t-table (5.607 > 1.970) X has an effect on Y

Source: Processed primary data, 2025.

Based on the hypothesis testing results, the t-count value is 5.607 with a significance level of 0.001. At a probability level of 0.05 (95% confidence), the corresponding t-table value is 1.970. Since the t-count value exceeds the t-table value ($5.607 > 1.970$) and the significance value is lower than 0.05 ($0.001 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that self-control (X) has

a significant effect on the manners of Generation Alpha (Y). This finding indicates that the ability of Generation Alpha to regulate emotions and behavior plays an essential role in shaping polite conduct. Higher levels of self-control, such as the capacity to delay gratification, are associated with more polite behaviors, including showing respect for others, using appropriate language, and adhering to social norms. In contrast, lower self-control tends to manifest in less polite behaviors, such as emotional outbursts or disregard for social rules. These results further suggest that self-control is not merely an innate internal trait but can be developed through educational processes and environmental influences, highlighting the importance of character education programs in fostering politeness among Generation Alpha.

The Influence of Self-Control on Manners

The results of this study indicate that self-control has a significant effect on manners among Generation Alpha. The simple linear regression analysis yields the equation $Y = 23.232 + 0.882 \cdot X$, where the constant value of 23.232, represents the level of manners when self-control is zero, indicating that manners tend to decline in the absence of self-control. The regression coefficient of 0.882 demonstrates that each one-unit increase in self-control is associated with an increase of 0.882 units in manners, confirming a positive and direct relationship between the two variables. This finding is reinforced by the t-test results, which show that the calculated t-value exceeds the t-table value ($5.607 > 1.970$) and the significance value is below 0.05 ($0.001 < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that self-control significantly influences the manners of Generation Alpha.

These findings indicate that Generation Alpha's capacity to regulate emotions and behavior plays a crucial role in shaping their level of politeness. Higher self-control, particularly the ability to delay gratification, is associated with more polite conduct, including showing respect for others, using appropriate language, and adhering to social norms. In contrast, lower self-control tends to manifest in less polite behavior, such as emotional outbursts or disregard for social rules. In line with Self-Control Theory proposed by Gottfredson et al (2022), students with strong self-control are better able to restrain themselves from imitating behaviors that are impolite or inconsistent with moral values.

These findings are supported by several previous studies emphasizing the central role of self-control in shaping socially appropriate behavior. Botvinik-Nezer et al (2020), argue that self-control is closely linked to social norms and standards that define acceptable conduct in various contexts, including manners, where norm-violating behaviors such as inappropriate speech or excessive self-disclosure are commonly associated with low self-control. This perspective highlights that self-control is not merely an internal cognitive mechanism but is strongly influenced by social contexts in which behavior is evaluated. Similarly, Ridder et al (2018) self-control has small to moderate positive effects on behaviors that include manners as a form of desirable behavior. Specifically, self-control is similarly related to the performance of desirable behaviors and the inhibition of undesirable behaviors. The effects of self-control vary across life domains, suggesting that higher self-control can lead to better social behavior and conduct. Research from Kable (2011) further reinforces this view by showing that self-control is shaped by social norms that guide individuals in aligning their behavior with societal expectations. Empirical evidence from Adetya (2023) indicates that adolescents with higher self-control tend to exhibit healthier behavioral patterns, make more considered decisions, and demonstrate better manners as part of overall well-being. In addition, Abdullah et al., (2021), found that self-control negatively predicts aggressive verbal behavior on social media, suggesting that higher self-control reduces verbal aggression and contributes to more polite communication practices.

This finding is supported by several previous studies by Salamudin et al., (2023), at SMP Ciledug Al Musaddadiyah Garut after using self-control learning strategies carried out by the principal, teachers and positive habits in the school environment. In line with the research Vinahari et al., (2024), there is a significant positive relationship between self-control and polite behavior ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The effective contribution of the independent variable to polite behavior in this study was 58%. Research Trismayangsari et al., (2023), the values that contribute to forming self-control from the Javanese tribe are politeness or etiquette, honesty, discipline, and trust. Research Refnandes et al., (2023), there is a significant relationship between self-control and juvenile delinquency ($p\text{-value} = 0.03.7$). Research from Raditia et al., (2021), students view self-control as an effort to restrain themselves from bad things so as not to harm themselves or others. Some students have been able to control themselves quite well in various aspects, but some have not been able to control themselves well.

Conclusion

The results of the research hypothesis testing indicate that self-control significantly influences the manners of Generation Alpha. Generation Alpha's ability to control their own emotions and behavior plays a crucial role in shaping their level of manners. High self-control, such as the ability to delay gratification, tends to result in more polite behavior, such as respecting others, using appropriate language, and maintaining social etiquette. Conversely, low self-control leads to less polite behavior, such as being easily angered or ignoring norms. These findings, based on data analysis, emphasize that self-control is not only an internal factor but can also be trained through education and the environment, so that interventions such as character development programs can be effective in improving manners among Generation Alpha. Some suggestions that can be considered include the need to develop a more comprehensive model or conceptual framework for character formation among Generation Alpha in the digital era that integrates various factors. For other

researchers, it is recommended to conduct further research using more diverse methodological approaches such as *mixed methods*, experiments, or *longitudinal studies* to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

Suggestions

Based on the findings that demonstrate a significant relationship between self-control and manners, several recommendations can be proposed to support character development among Generation Alpha in the digital era. As high school students, Generation Alpha is encouraged to continuously strengthen their self-control abilities, particularly in regulating emotions, thoughts, and behaviors during interactions in both offline and online environments. Enhancing self-control is crucial for enabling individuals to critically filter information, respond appropriately to various situations, and maintain conduct that aligns with prevailing social norms.

Acknowledgment

First, the researcher would like to express sincere appreciation to the Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta for the support and facilitation provided during the research process. The researcher also extends gratitude to the senior high schools in Karanganyar District for granting permission and cooperation, which made the implementation of this study possible.

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